

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D. C.



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November 30, 1936

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEFS OF BUREAUS AND OFFICES

Subject: Temporary arrangement for coordinating flood-control activities.

The Flood Control Act of 1936 (Public 738 74th Congress) recognizes flood control as a public responsibility and sets up a new national policy for flood control by establishing work on lands as coordinate with work on rivers. The Department of Agriculture is made responsible for work on land; the War Department for work on rivers.

The immediate job is to survey certain watersheds which are specified in the Act and to submit reports thereon to Congress. The Act authorizes an appropriation of 10 million dollars for the purpose, this sum to be divided equally between the Departments of War and Agriculture.

These surveys will involve some new features for the Department, as well as enlargement of current activities. Thus, while the Department has undertaken reforestation, soil erosion control work, land-use planning, and so on, it has not woven all of these into one picture. Certainly the comprehensive nature of the surveys and reports indicates that many of the bureaus of the Department will be involved. The two bureaus most vitally concerned are the Soil Conservation Service and the Forest Service. But the Bureau of Agricultural Economics will be concerned in the analysis of the complex economics problems involved. The Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, and other branches of the Department will no doubt have some contribution to make to the program. Further, certain studies will require the cooperation of agencies outside the Department, notably the War Department and the National Resources Committee.

While no part of the funds authorized by the Flood Control Act has been appropriated as yet, it is essential that the Department begin immediately to plan these activities. Fortunately, the Forest Service and the Soil Conservation Service are already doing considerable work on some of the watersheds specified in the Act, and the data on hand will provide a rough guide for determining

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priorities on some of these watersheds. The War Department has requested that we cooperate with it in establishing definite procedures for the execution of the survey work. Also, the National Resources Committee has requested that certain reports on flood control be made to it.

Pending the availability of the funds authorized by the Act--with which it will be possible to arrange more permanently for the coordination of the flood control work of the several bureaus--I am asking Mr. Eisenhower to represent me in correlating our efforts with those of the War Department and other federal agencies, and to serve as coordinating officer here in the Department so that the efforts of the various bureaus in this field may go ahead together. I shall appreciate it if the bureaus affected will provide Mr. Eisenhower, by temporary detail, with such technical assistance as may be needed. Also, I should like to have Mr. Silcox, Dr. Bennett and Dr. Black serve as an advisory committee with Mr. Eisenhower in formulating policies that now need to be developed, and in establishing the proper procedures within the Department for the efficient conduct of the work.

It is not at all necessary for the Department to build up a large central Office of Flood Control. The bureaus should carry the load of technical work. Mr. Eisenhower and a very small staff will collaborate with the bureaus in determining the scope of the surveys and reports, compromising what may at first be conflicting opinions on the responsibilities of the several bureaus, collaborating with bureaus to take the greatest advantage of existing funds and personnel, developing systematic procedures, and perhaps drawing up memoranda of understanding between the bureaus concerned.

I wish to ask that a meeting of the Advisory Committee, along with such specialists of the Soil Conservation and the Forest Service as may be necessary, be held immediately so as to lay the foundation for a conference with War Department officials early next week.

Sincerely yours,

H A Wallace

Secretary.

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